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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

MONDAY, MAY 8, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "POISON IVY." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Publication available, Farmers' Bulletin 1166-F.

--ooOoo--

"Leaflets three,- let it be" -- is a good homely saying for those who are not acquainted with poison ivy. Maybe the result is an undue amount of suspicion toward some innocent or harmless plants. But far better to gather fewer bouquets than to have a painful skin inflammation from touching poison ivy or poison oak.

Both of these plants are found in one or more forms in practically all sections of the country. Almost everybody is sensitive to ivy poisoning. All forms of poison ivy and poison oak are so nearly alike that once you know its general appearance, there's no difficulty in avoiding it.

The poison ivy plants are most readily recognized by their leaves, which are always divided into three leaflets, says the Bureau of Plant Industry of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. They also have whitish, waxy fruits, which look somewhat like mistletoe berries. The plants do not all bear fruits, but when they do, you can easily recognize them.

The vines of poison ivy spread underground by rootstocks, and the bushy growth may be as high as 4 or 5 feet. Often the vines climb on trees, poles or fences. The three leaflets when mature are dark green on the upper surface, lighter and sometimes velvety underneath. In autumn they turn beautiful shades of scarlet and orange, tempting the unwary to gather them for their color. In the West the plant takes the form of poison oak, with leaves much like the oak leaf.

Either form of the plant contains a poisonous substance with violently



irritating properties. All parts of the plant contain the poison even after long drying. It is well known that smoke from burning the plants may carry the poison. Shoes and other clothing worn while eradicating poison ivy or poison oak plants may also spread ivy poisoning, and tools used in working around the plants.

So the problem of getting rid of poison ivy plants is not easy. Sometimes persons can be found who seem to be immune to ivy poisoning, and if such persons are available it's well to employ them, rather than take the risk of attacking the growths oneself. If that's impossible, anyone starting to grub out ivy plants, or salt them or burn them, should wear heavy leggings, long leather gloves with gauntlets, and a heavy workshirt. He should protect the fact as much as possible, and especially stay away from the smoke while the debris is burning. All clothing worn should be removed promptly and washed with strong soap.

And right there is one of the best means of protection from ivy poisoning through accidental contact. "There is hope in kitchen soap," somebody once said. Plain yellow laundry soap with an excess of alkali is the best kind for the purpose. But it must be used at once. The idea is to get rid of any chance poison while it is still only on the surface of the skin. If you've taken a walk where there was poison ivy, or accidentally touched some, or helped in eradication work, immediately wash and rise the skin several times with ordinary kitchen soap and hot water- as hot as you can stand it.

Careless washing may spread the poison. Apply the soap freely, so as to produce an abundant, heavy lather on the exposed surfaces. Then rinse off completely. Repeat not less that 3 or 4 times. Running water is preferable, but if a basin is used, change the water frequently. Give the fingernails and hands particular attention, because the hands touch other parts of the body. The tender skin between the fingers is one of the first places where ivy poisoning breaks out. Wash this skin carefully, but don't scrub with a stiff brush. Even after



inflammation has developed thorough washing should be tried to remove all traces of the poison that can be reached.

Another treatment after being exposed to poison ivy is to dab alcohol on the hands and other exposed parts of the skin. Use absorbent cotton and discard each piece as used. A local application often recommended is a solution of 5 parts of ferric chloride in 95 parts of a half-and-half mixture of water and glycerine. Ferric chloride is one of the salts of iron. Shall I repeat that formula? Five parts of ferric chloride in 95 parts of a half and half mixture of water and glycerine. This solution lessens inflammation, and if applied to the skin before going into a region where contact with poison ivy is likely, it may prevent trouble. Any treatment following exposure to ivy poisoning must be prompt to do any good.

Mild cases of ivy poisoning usually subside within a few days. The discomfort caused by them can be allayed to some extent, after the preliminary washing with kitchen soap, by swabbing with a 5 percent solution of potassium permanganate, or a solution of cooking soda, or Epsom salt. Use light bandages, kept moist, change them frequently, and burn those discarded. Do not use oily remedies at first. Bad cases of ivy poisoning should be treated by a physician.

Common salt and crankcase oil mixed with kerosene are the best substances for killing poison ivy plants. Salt solution sprayed on is good if it reaches all the leaves. The first spraying is effective if done not later than the end of June. Sometimes three or more sprayings are required. Crankcase oil, thinned with kerosene, also makes a good spray. Neither of these sprays can be used if they are likely to injure valuable trees or nearby plants.

If willing workmen can be obtained, small isolated patches of poison ivy plants can be grubbed or pulled out and burned, and long vines growing on trees can be severed with a hatchet so they will die.

There's a free publication which you can get from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, which gives other methods of dealing with poison ivy and poison oak, also with poison sumac. This is an entirely different plant with much the same effect on human beings. Ask for Farmers' Bulletin 1166-F, Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac and Their Eradication.

But meantime, remember: "Leaflets three, - let it be." And "there is hope in kitchen soap."



